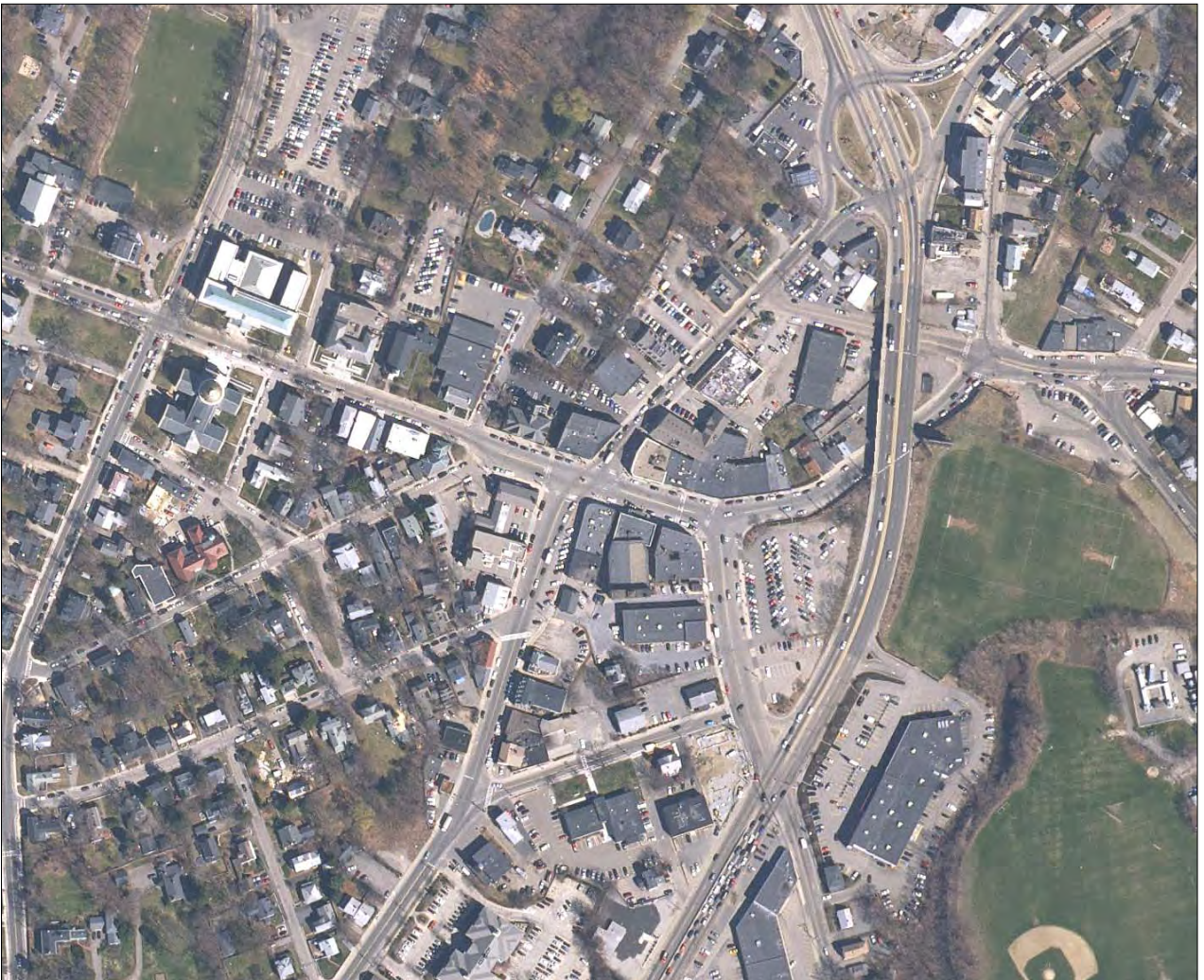


# **DEDHAM SQUARE PLANNING AND REDEVELOPMENT STUDY**

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Prepared for the Town of Dedham

Prepared by The Cecil Group

June 25, 2007

This study has been funded through a grant from the Department of Housing and  
Community Development Downtown Initiative

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The purpose of this study is to provide the Town of Dedham with recommendations on viable options for the redevelopment of the Keystone lot and opportunities to improve the availability of parking in the town center. The Town owns the Keystone lot, which is a strategically located property in the downtown currently used as a public parking lot. This property could be redeveloped for mixed uses to reinforce the center's vitality. Previous studies have established the likely need for additional parking in Dedham Square, including provision for overflow parking needs from the nearby Superior and District Courthouses. Since the Keystone lot is used for public parking, the definition of a redevelopment strategy is closely linked and interdependent with the definition of a strategy to provide for future parking needs.

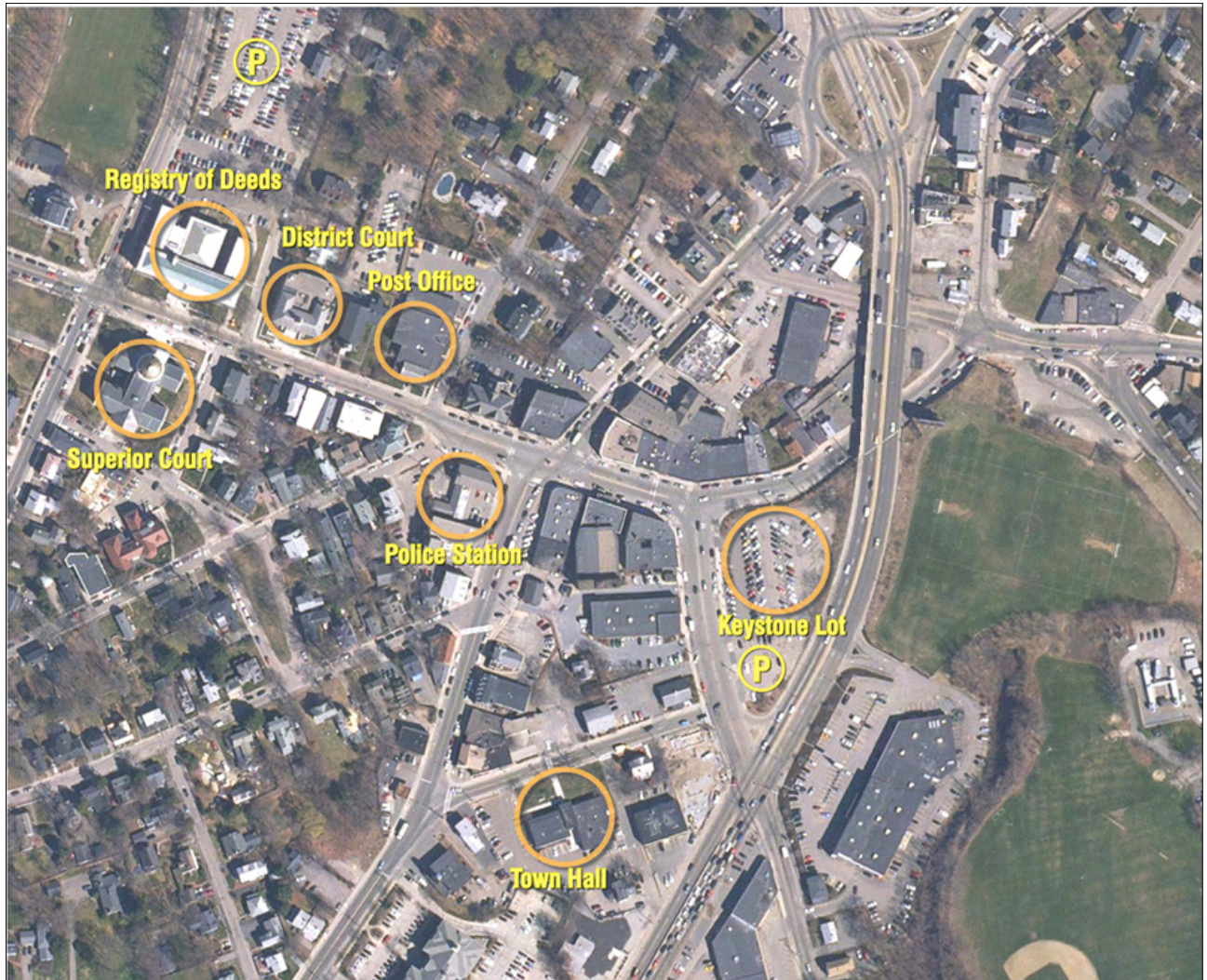
The analysis of redevelopment options as part of this study has been coordinated with an ongoing planning process associated with the need to expand the existing Probate and Family Courts. This much needed expansion of the existing court facilities will likely require the relocation of the existing Norfolk County Registry of Deeds to a nearby location. These facilities together with the historic Dedham Superior Court are clustered around the intersection of Court and High Streets, just two blocks away from Dedham Square. For all practical purposes, the Courthouse campus is an active component of the downtown area and Central Business District (see *Figure 1, Dedham Square Area*, on page 2).

The Town is in the process of updating its master plan, part of which focuses on the revitalization of Dedham Square. The Town is also working to apply for a Public Works Economic Development grant to enhance the streets and sidewalks in the area. Recent improvements in the square include benches, trash barrels and bike racks. A new organization of businesses, organizations and residents, the Dedham Square Circle has been recently formed to preserve and revitalize Dedham Square using the National Trust's Main Streets Program.

The revitalization of the Keystone lot will be a key step in the revitalization of the square and the downtown, given its size and location. It is the largest single parcel of land currently undeveloped. Appropriate development of the site could greatly contribute to the character and vitality of the square if the right mix of uses is achieved, including uses that would bring people, business and economic activity.

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*Figure 1, Dedham Square Area*

### Summary of Recommendations

The following general recommendations are offered as part of the proposed redevelopment strategy:

- Seek the redevelopment of the Keystone lot for market-based mixed use that includes pedestrian-oriented retail along High Street and Eastern Avenue.
- Conduct a detailed traffic and parking study to determine future parking needs for the downtown, including projections for the Keystone lot, the new Court facilities, and other potential future development.
- Investigate the potential to create additional public parking in the downtown, including a technical and feasibility study for the development of a parking garage.
- Coordinate these initiatives with the ongoing planning and design process to modernize and expand the Probate and Family Courts.
- Seek state and federal assistance with funding for the recommended studies and the cost of building a parking garage.
- Consider the creation of a local parking authority to administer, manage and supervise the operations of public parking facilities in the downtown.

Detailed steps and recommended actions are described on pages 14 to 16 of this report.

Dedham Square and the surrounding town center are characterized by the presence of numerous small retail and professional businesses. As part of the Central Business District zone, a wide range of commercial uses and activities are allowed in the study area at a scale and density consistent with the historic character of the existing building fabric (see *Figure 2, Study Area*, on page 5). These include several cafes and restaurants. Zoning allows for mixed use development, in which buildings containing “dwelling units in combination with stores or other permitted uses” are accommodated. A new mixed use development is currently underway at the corner of Washington and Bryant Streets.

In addition to downtown commercial uses, the Town’s prime civic and cultural institutions are located within the study area, including Town Hall, Fire Station, Police Station and the Public Library. The Dedham Theater, established in 1927 and recently renovated to accommodate functions, movie projections, live comedy and a “Museum Of Bad Art” in its basement has also become a local amenity that regularly attracts customers from all over the town and the surrounding communities.

The civic and institutional character of the square is emphasized by the presence of the Dedham Superior and District Courthouses and the Norfolk County Registry of Deeds. These buildings represent significant historic and architectural landmarks. The Superior Court’s dome is visible well above the trees and serves to identify the location of the downtown from a far away distance.

Dedham Square is competing with large-format retailers and ongoing commercial development along the adjacent Providence Highway (Route 1) to attract customers. As many other historic downtowns, the square is striving to maintain its identity and retain its small businesses against the challenge posed by national retailer chains that are capturing an increased share of the local market.

The Keystone lot plays an important role in the future of the downtown. It is the single largest underutilized parcel in the downtown, occupying an entire block strategically located between Route 1 and the core of the business district. Given its size and location, this property represents a physical and visual gateway into the downtown for vehicles traveling along Route 1. The potential redevelopment of this parcel would provide an opportunity to complete what is now an unfinished physical edge of the commercial district, and to bring complementary uses and activities that would contribute to revitalize the economic base of the downtown.

The Keystone lot comprises an area of approximately 63,000 square feet or 1.45 acres. It is currently used as a municipal parking lot, providing 157 public parking spaces within walking distance of the most active downtown retail and office areas.

The current use of the Keystone lot for public parking raises important questions concerning the implications of its potential redevelopment for uses other than parking. Site observations indicate that the lot is actively used on a daily basis. These observations were not rigorously timed or recorded over extended periods of time and, therefore, more detailed studies will be needed in order to determine who uses the parking lot and how often parking spaces become available. However, it is reasonable to assume that substitute parking would need to be found within the downtown to serve the parking demand currently supported by the Keystone lot, unless the redevelopment program for the lot includes sufficient surplus parking to satisfy this demand.





*Figure 2, Study Area*

### Downtown Parking Constraints

An analysis of downtown parking done by The Cecil Group in 2003 concluded that there are enough on-street and off-street parking spaces in the downtown to meet future parking demand. This conclusion was based on moderate growth projections for downtown business and services, excluding the parking demand generated by the Courts (*Downtown Parking Capacity Analysis*, The Cecil Group, January 2003). The balance of parking supply and demand could be significantly altered if market conditions would change as a result of a sudden increase in economic activity. However, concluded the analysis, it appears that a sustainable balance of parking supply and demand could be achieved and maintained in the downtown if future development provides enough on-site parking to satisfy its own needs.

It has long been observed that the Court facilities and the Registry of Deeds generate a substantial parking demand that at times spills over to other sectors of the downtown area. A detailed assessment of parking needs for the Courts carried out by Rizzo Associates in 2002 identified a parking deficit of approximately 31 spaces on peak days, which could increase to more than 191 spaces by 2012 (*Parking Needs Assessment, Dedham Probate and Family Court, Dedham, Massachusetts*). Current parking demand in the downtown fluctuates during the day, with peak times during the morning when the Court facilities begin operations. Part of the peak demand is associated with the pool of tentative jurors that assembles each morning prior to jury selection.

The ongoing planning process to identify strategic options for the expansion of the Court facilities has narrowed down the anticipated parking deficit based on the most current assessment of future space needs. It is estimated that the current site of the Registry of Deeds (anticipated to become the site for expansion of the Probate and Family Court) could possibly accommodate up to 380 parking spaces with the provision of a parking deck behind the new building. Depending on which relocation option is adopted for the Registry of Deeds, approximately 40 to 120 parking spaces would need to be accommodated elsewhere in the downtown.

The Keystone lot provides a significant part of the existing off-street and public parking supply, accommodating up to 157 parking spaces. These spaces contribute to maintain the existing parking balance in the downtown. Should the Keystone lot be redeveloped for commercial or mixed use, the provision of public parking may be compromised by the capacity of the site to accommodate parking in excess of the amount needed to satisfy the demand of the new development. If retaining the existing amount of public parking spaces in the Keystone lot becomes unfeasible, the estimated downtown parking deficit could increase to approximately 280 parking spaces unless alternative provisions are made.



Redevelopment opportunities for the Keystone lot are framed by the current zoning regulations. The parcel is located within the Central Business (CB) district, which has been established to recognize and enhance Dedham Square as the Town's civic, cultural and business center. Zoning allows for a wide range of pedestrian oriented retail, government and institutional uses, professional offices and upper floor residential apartments. Mixed use is allowed as long as buildings containing dwelling units also include stores or other permitted uses.

Several development options were investigated for the Keystone lot as part of this study, each contemplating a different use: office use, residential use, mixed use and retail. The analysis of development options investigated potential site capacity for each use by testing the layout of alternative building footprints. The analysis indicated that the lot could easily accommodate a 20,000-square foot building footprint (approximately 180 feet long by 110 feet deep), which is a typical building footprint for new Class A and Class B office developments. The same area could be shaped in the form of a 60-foot deep building stretching along the High Street and Eastern Avenue site frontages. This 60-foot deep footprint would be adequate for retail and mixed use development including pedestrian-oriented retail at the ground level, and would leave space available on the lot to accommodate parking at grade behind the building.

Potential building volumes were then evaluated in relation to their parking needs and the amount of parking spaces that would generated by each use option. The results are summarized in the following chart.

*Table 1. Potential Development Options and Parking Needs for the Keystone Lot*

Use Option	Floor Area (sf)	Number of Floors	Area by Use (sf)	Parking Ratio <sup>(1)</sup>	Required Parking	Potential Parking <sup>(2)</sup>
<b>Office Development</b>						
Office Space	20,000	2	40,000	4	160	App. 160
<b>Retail Development</b>						
Retail Space	20,000	1	20,000	5	100	App. 80
<b>Mixed-Use Development</b>						
Residential Space	20,000	2	40,000	1.5	50	
Retail Space	20,000	1	20,000	5	100	
<b>Mixed-Use Totals</b>		3	60,000		150	App.80

Notes:

(1) Parking ratios for office and retail uses are assumed on a per 1000-square foot basis, consistent with zoning requirements; parking ratios for residential use are estimated on a unit basis, assuming a gross square footage of 1200 sf per unit.

(2) Potential parking is based on rough estimates of future site capacity for parking at grade behind the buildings; office development estimates assume that the ground level of the building is used for parking.

A comparison between the number of required parking and potential parking spaces by use option indicates that parking may impose stronger limitations on the amount of development that could be achieved at the Keystone lot than the Maximum Building Height (40 feet) or the maximum Floor Area Ratio (2.4) allowed by zoning. Thus, two floors of office use could be developed on the site if the ground level of the building is dedicated to parking. However, the development of one floor of retail space or a mixed use complex including one level of retail and two of multifamily residential units would

generate a parking deficit of approximately 70 spaces that would need to be accommodated underground or at a nearby location. In addition, none of these options would provide enough parking to substitute or replace the 157 public spaces currently existing on the lot, unless underground parking is built.

The cost of building underground parking is very high compared to the cost of parking at-grade. Concept-planning level estimates for underground parking vary from about \$20,000 to \$30,000 per vehicle depending on layout, total number of parking spaces and soil conditions. In comparison, the cost of building parking at grade may be approximately \$2,500 to \$3,500 per vehicle. On the type of development that could take place at the Keystone lot, high costs of parking could possibly render the whole project unfeasible. However, a mixed use development project currently underway at the corner of Washington and Bryant Streets includes one underground parking level. If this project is economically feasible, there is a certain possibility that the development of underground parking at the Keystone lot may also be.

Assuming that the construction of an underground parking level is feasible, any of the identified development options could accommodate enough on-site parking to satisfy its own needs. However, only the development of two levels of office space above two levels of parking (one underground at one at grade) would provide enough parking spaces to replace the existing public parking.

Two important goals of the Dedham Square Circle and the local business community is to increase pedestrian activity in the downtown and the provision of parking. The local community's vision for the future of the Keystone lot includes pedestrian-oriented retail along the High Street and Eastern Avenue frontage, which would contribute to increase foot travel between the existing business and new businesses on the lot. Retail at the ground level of the Keystone lot would also contribute to strengthen the urban design character and image of the downtown by providing a physical "boundary" that would define and separate the business district from the highway.

An important finding from the analysis of redevelopment options for the Keystone lot is that the redevelopment feasibility of the lot would benefit from added flexibility if provisions are made for the supply of additional off-site parking at a nearby location. This would make it easier for a development to include pedestrian-oriented retail at the ground level, which would contribute to achieve commercial revitalization goals for the downtown. The amount of off-site parking required may vary from approximately 70 to 230 parking spaces depending on the development program assumed for the Keystone lot, and the Town's intention to replace some or all of the existing municipal parking.

Several meetings with the Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management and the Planning Group advancing the Courthouse improvement projects were attended as part of this study. The purpose of the meetings was to review planning options for the reconstruction of the Probate and Family Court and the potential relocation of the Registry of Deeds. This relocation will be necessary in order to allow for the reuse of the current Registry's site for new and expanded Court facilities.

Initial consideration of relocation options for the Registry of Deeds included the Keystone lot as a possible site. The Keystone lot's development capacity as well as its location within Dedham Square, not far from the Courts, would make it a good site for the Registry within walking distance from the rest of the Court campus.

The Planning Group meetings served to clarify two important constraints affecting a potential relocation of the Registry of Deeds to the Keystone lot:

- The space program needs of the Registry would make use of all the site capacity for new development and accessory parking. This would eliminate the possibility of having retail uses along the street front or areas for public parking in addition to the parking required for the development.
- The County would like to own the new Registry site and facilities. The current owner of the Keystone lot, the Town of Dedham, would prefer to retain ownership of the lot by leasing it on a long-term basis rather than selling.

These constraints led to a decision by the Planning Group to pursue the relocation of the Registry of Deeds to a site other than the Keystone lot. Several potential relocation sites are currently under consideration.

Another important conclusion of the Planning Group meetings was the realization that a potential parking deficit for the new Court facilities is likely to happen at certain times of the day. Although this parking deficit will likely be smaller than originally anticipated by the parking study carried out by Rizzo Associates in 2002, it will still represent a significant impact on Dedham Square and the surrounding area, possibly amounting to approximately 40 to 120 parking spaces that would need to be accommodated elsewhere in the downtown.

It became clear during these meetings that it is in the mutual interest of all the parties responsible for planning for the future of Dedham Square and the Courts to work together towards a resolution of potential parking deficits in the downtown. Adding up the parking deficits that may occur as a result of the redevelopment of the Keystone lot and the expansion of Court facilities, a total of approximately 350 new parking spaces may need to be created within the downtown in order to avoid future negative economic impacts due to lack of parking.



## PARKING IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS

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A potential solution to the problems that might be caused in the future by a lack of sufficient parking in the downtown would be the creation of a public parking garage within the Dedham Square area.

The development of a public parking garage would meet the following purposes:

- Provide public parking to meet the current and estimated future demand of downtown businesses.
- Allow for the relocation of public parking spaces now existing on the Keystone lot should this property become available for redevelopment.
- Provide additional parking supply to meet future peak demands from the Courts and the Registry of Deeds.

The feasibility of developing a parking garage in the downtown is dependent to a great extent on the physical capacity of the existing blocks and parcels and the existing parcel structure within each block.

### Potential Garage Locations

A preliminary analysis of the existing block and parcel structure within the Dedham Square area indicates the presence of a few locations that could accommodate the footprint of a small parking garage. An efficient building footprint for a small parking garage requires an area of approximately 120 feet by 240 feet, altogether about a half acre. Depending on the final size and layout of parking spaces, such a footprint could accommodate about 88 to 92 vehicles per floor. A four-story parking garage could provide space for approximately 350 to 370 vehicles in a structure that would be approximately 30 to 40 feet tall (parking garages require a minimum 10-foot height between stories, and the upper level does not need to be covered).

There are three blocks within the downtown that could accommodate such a footprint:

- The Keystone lot.
- The block bound by (clockwise) High Street, Eastern Avenue, Bryant Street and Washington Street.
- The block bound by (clockwise) Harris Street, High Street and Washington Street.

Each of these areas presents advantages and disadvantages for the construction of a public garage. Each block needs to be considered on an individual basis.

The Keystone lot is owned by the Town of Dedham. This represents an advantage over other potential locations for a parking garage because it is under public ownership and control. However, the size, location and high visibility of this parcel contribute to make it valuable for a market-oriented development that would be complementary to the existing downtown uses. Should this block be redeveloped for market-based uses, the possibilities to accommodate public parking on this site in addition to the parking necessary to support on-site development would be severely restricted. Most likely, the provision of public parking spaces in this case would not be economically feasible without significant public subsidy or investment in the creation of underground parking.

The block bound by High Street, Eastern Avenue, Bryant Street and Washington Street is subdivided into several land parcels occupied by business uses. Preliminary layout explorations indicate that a small parking garage could be accommodated within this block with possible access from Bryant Street, Washington Street and Eastern Avenue. A garage in this area would be highly accessible by car and within walking distance from the Court facilities. However, constraints for the development of a public garage on this block might be represented by the need to incorporate the participation of existing property owners and the potential need to provide for acquisition of some of the existing properties for redevelopment purposes.

The block bound by Harris Street, High Street and Washington Street is also subdivided into individual land parcels. Although some of these properties appear to be underutilized and could possibly be susceptible to change, the shape of this block is less conducive to the location of a garage than the other two blocks considered. It would be difficult to accommodate the footprint of a small garage in this area without causing significant disruption to existing buildings along High Street, which would cause a negative impact on the design character and pedestrian activity in the square. The development of a parking garage on this block would also likely require a substantial reconfiguration of the Washington Street and Harris Street intersection.

These areas are represented in *Figure 3, Potential Garage Locations*, on page 12.

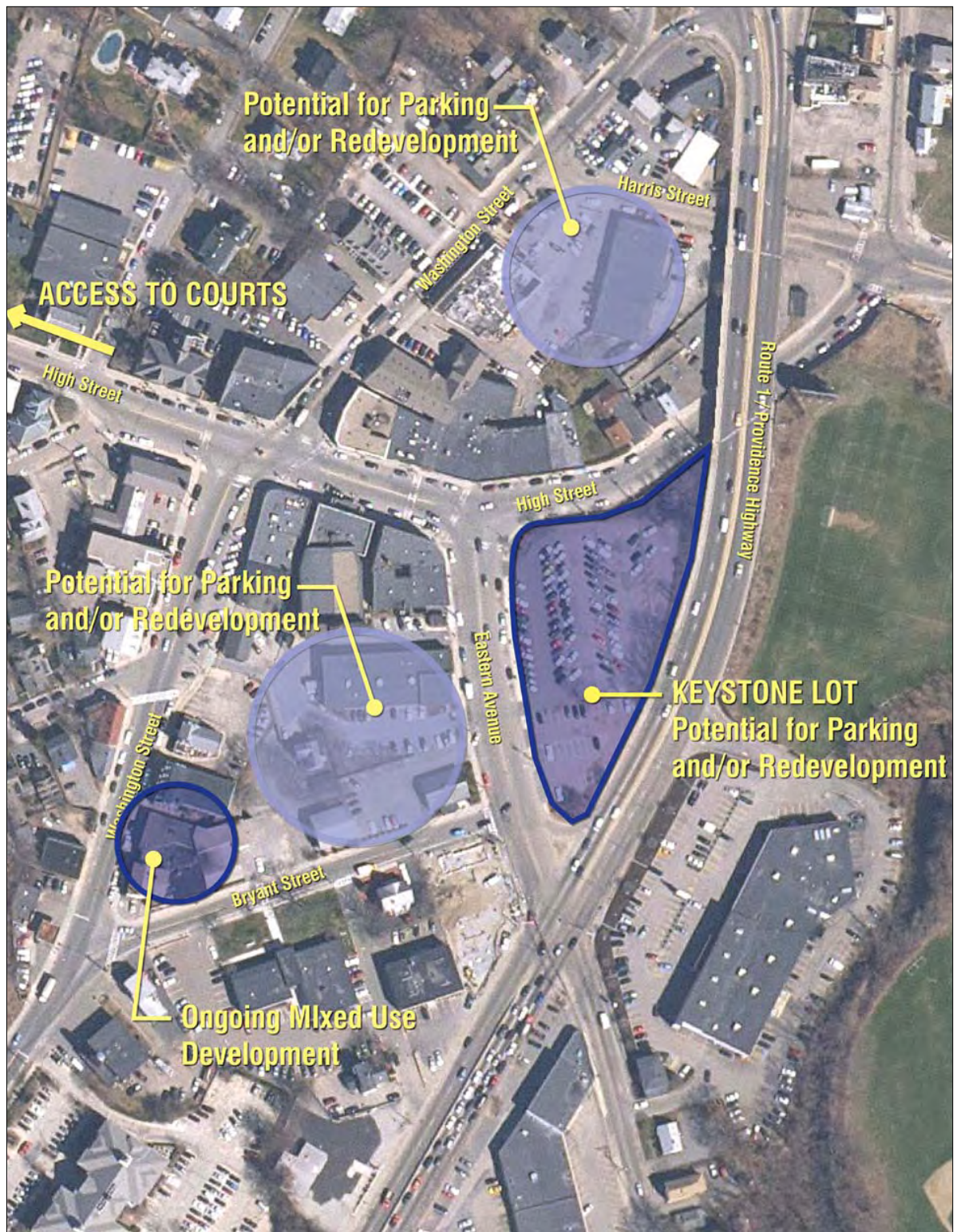


Figure 3, Potential Garage Locations



The following recommendations are offered as a result of this study:

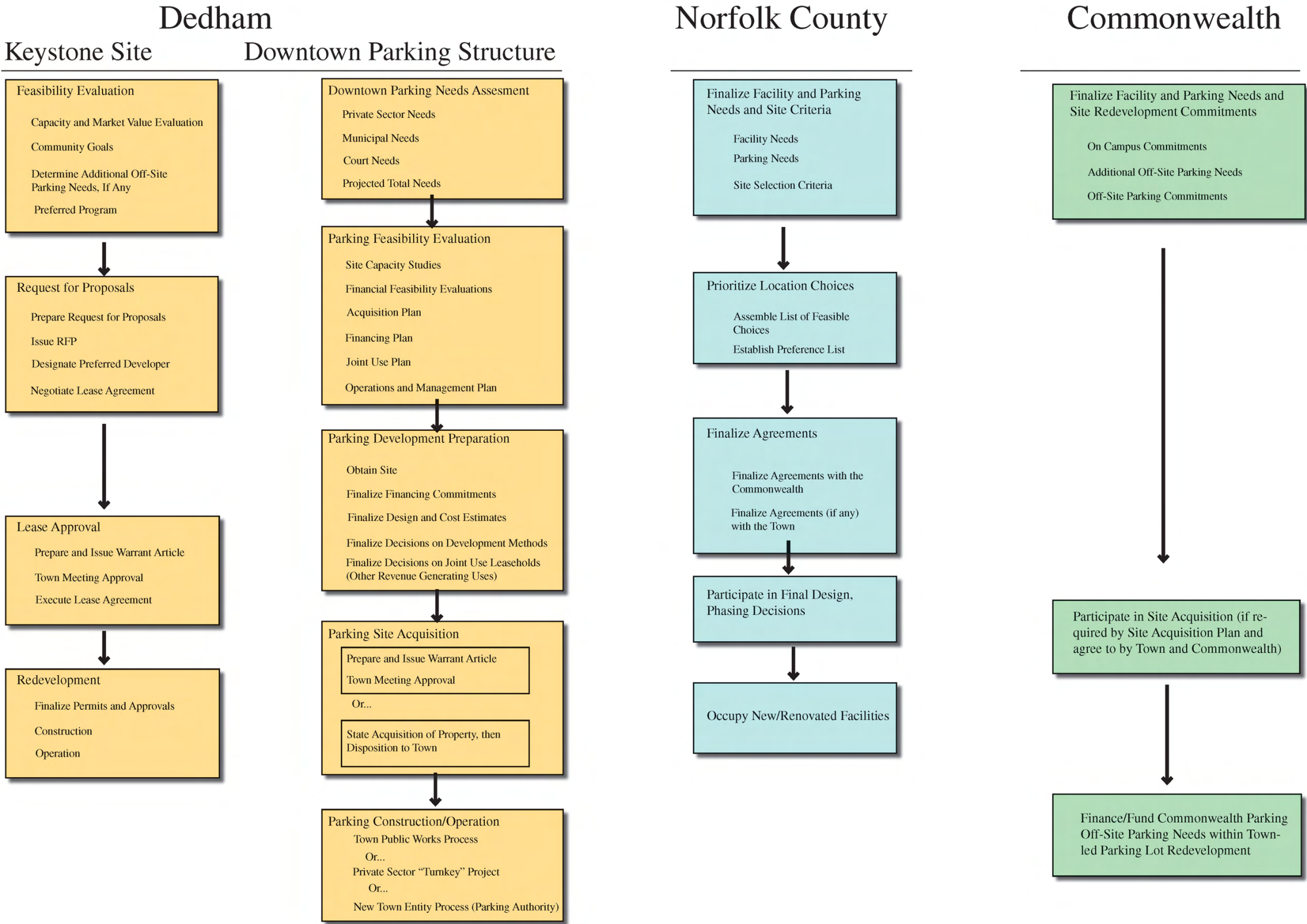
- Seek the redevelopment of the Keystone lot for market uses that include pedestrian-oriented retail along High Street and Eastern Avenue.
- Conduct a detailed traffic and parking study to determine future parking needs for the downtown, including projections for the Keystone lot, the new Court facilities, and other potential future development.
- Investigate the potential to create additional public parking in the downtown, including a technical and feasibility study for the development of a parking garage.
- Coordinate these initiatives with the ongoing planning and design process to modernize and expand the Probate and Family Courts.
- Seek state and federal assistance with funding for the recommended studies and the cost of building a parking garage.
- Consider the creation of a local parking authority to administer, manage and supervise the operations of public parking facilities in the downtown.

### Recommended Actions

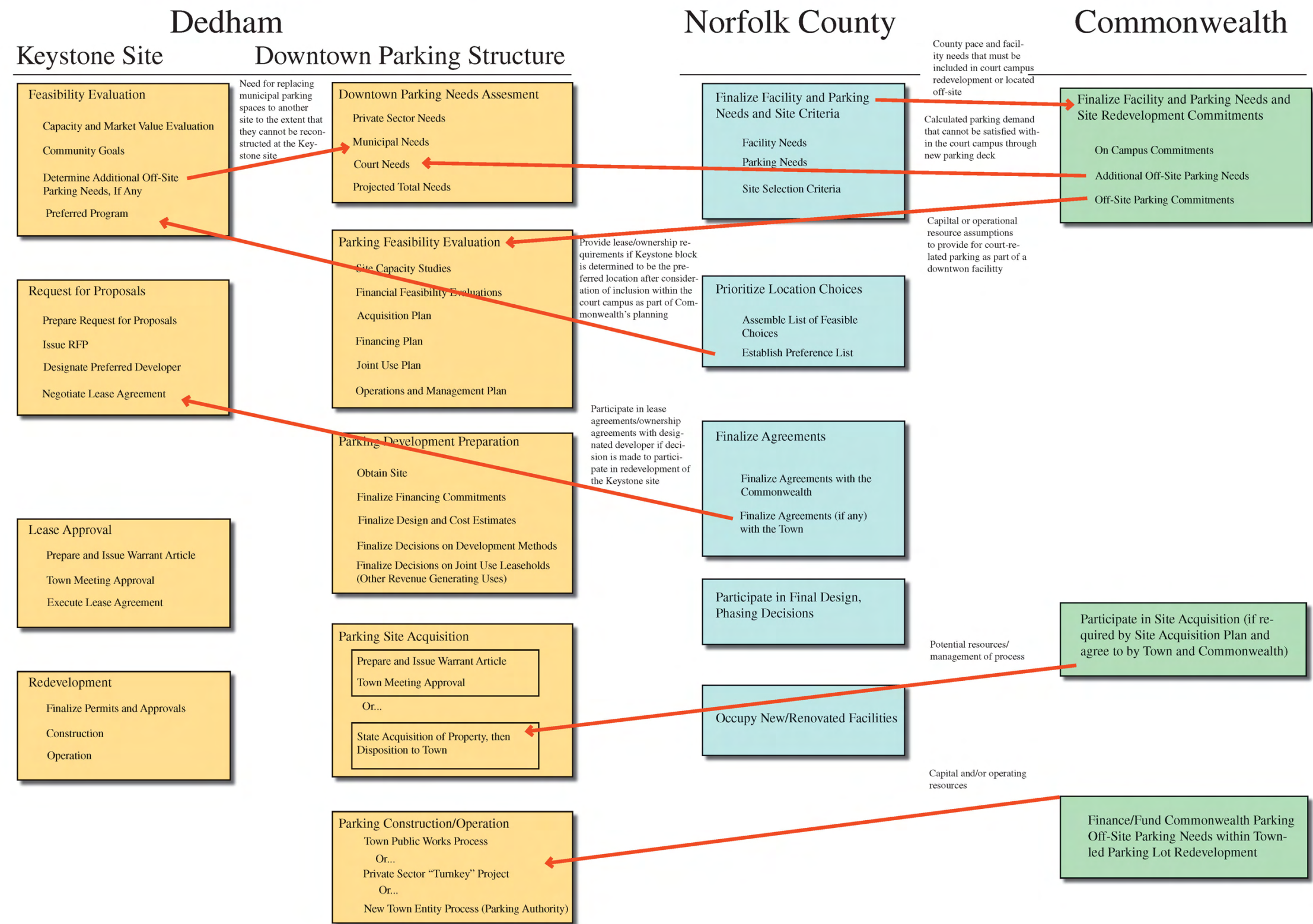
Detailed planning steps and recommended actions for the redevelopment of the Keystone lot and the creation of a downtown parking structure are outlined on page 14, as part of initiatives recommended for the Town of Dedham (*Key Steps*). Related actions resulting from the ongoing planning efforts for expansion and improvement of the Courts are also indicated on the chart, as part of anticipated Norfolk County and Commonwealth's responsibilities.

The chart on page 15, *Key Relationships*, describes the potential relationships of timing and funding interaction between the outlined Town, County and Commonwealth planning and development strategies.

*Time, Costs and Resources*, on page 16, lists concept planning-level assumptions of probable cost and timing for the redevelopment of the Keystone lot and the creation of a downtown parking structure. These are herein included for planning purposes only, and should not be used or interpreted as estimates of future construction costs.



KEY RELATIONSHIPS





Dedham	
Keystone Site	
Feasibility Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Capacity and Market Value Evaluation</li><li>Community Goals</li><li>Determine Additional Off-Site Parking Needs, If Any</li><li>Preferred Program</li></ul>	Cost: About \$50,000 to 75,000  Time: About 5 months  Resources: Town Funds  State Grants (DHCD, Other Sources)
Request for Proposals <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Prepare Request for Proposals</li><li>Issue RFP</li><li>Designate Preferred Developer</li><li>Negotiate Lease Agreement</li></ul>	Cost: About \$25,000 to \$50,000  Time: About 5 months  Resources: Town Funds  State Grants (DHCD, Other Sources)
Lease Approval <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Prepare and Issue Warrant Article</li><li>Town Meeting Approval</li><li>Execute Lease Agreement</li></ul>	Cost: About \$25,000 to \$50,000  Time: About 6 months  Resources: Town Funds, compensated through development agreement/lease proceeds
Redevelopment <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Finalize Permits and Approvals</li><li>Construction</li><li>Operation</li></ul>	Time: About 6 months  Resources: Town expenses compensated through development agreement/lease proceeds

Downtown Parking Structure	
Downtown Parking Needs Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Private Sector Needs</li><li>Municipal Needs</li><li>Court Needs</li><li>Projected Total Needs</li></ul>	Cost: About \$10,000 to \$15,000  Time: About 3 months  Resources: Town Funds  State Grants (DHCD, Other Sources)
Parking Feasibility Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Site Capacity Studies</li><li>Financial Feasibility Evaluations</li><li>Acquisition Plan</li><li>Financing Plan</li><li>Joint Use Plan</li><li>Operations and Management Plan</li></ul>	Cost: About \$15,000 to \$25,000  Time: About 3 months  Resources: Town Funds  State Grants (DHCD, Other Sources)
Parking Development Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Obtain Site</li><li>Finalize Financing Commitments</li><li>Finalize Design and Cost Estimates</li><li>Finalize Decisions on Development Methods</li><li>Finalize Decisions on Joint Use Leaseholds (Other Revenue Generating Uses)</li></ul>	Cost: Depends on Project Size  Time: About 12 months  Resources: Town Funds, compensated through development agreement/lease proceeds
Parking Site Acquisition	Cost: Depends on Project Size and Site  Time: About 12 months  Resources: Town Funds State Funds Financed Funds (see below)
Parking Construction/Operation <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Town Public Works Process</li><li>Or...</li><li>Private Sector “Turnkey” Project</li><li>Or...</li><li>New Town Entity Process (Parking Authority)</li></ul>	Cost: Depends on Project Size and Site  Time: About 12 to 18 months  Resources: District Improvement Financing Capital funds/guaranteed leases for court-related spaces Proceeds from Sale/Lease of Keystone Site Town Revenue Bond Town General Obligation Bond Sale/Lease of excess land for joint development State or federal grants